

Read to the Port Commission Wednesday April 13, 2011

It must be the money.

What's wrong with having another five, ten or fifty nice young men (who might otherwise not have jobs) hanging out in uniform with guns at the Port or driving around in government cars with radios, infrared cameras and long distance listening devices looking for the occasional mom from Guatemala without all the right paperwork?

There is a lot wrong with that but let's start with the argument that the money could have been spent on teachers or health care or the arts, all of which are suffering draconian funding cuts.

It's especially disturbing that the Border Patrol has all this money when it's not at all clear that we need their services. The Border Patrol won't tell us anything about what they are doing. Unlike the police and sheriff departments, they won't even report who they have arrested - probably because they haven't arrested anywhere near enough undocumented aliens and terrorists to justify their overwhelming presence. One local newspaper filed a Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) request for information which was denied in the name of the 1974 Privacy Act, which prompted another journalist to remark, "The idea that the government protects "privacy" by allowing people to be arrested and detained in secret is bizarre."

Secret police, armed and menacing to many in our community, without much to do and refusing to be accountable - I think we should stand up against police state tactics.

The Port Commission, which bills itself "like a city council ... a policy making and regulatory body" should be accountable to the people - transparent and open to public scrutiny. Yet no public hearing has been set to discuss renting space to the Border Patrol.

It must be the money. The Border Patrol has plenty of money whereas the maritime business has suffered in this economy. "It's just a business decision."

Much as the Port may need the money, we don't need to sell out this cheaply. I recommend that the Port Commission not rent space to the Border Patrol and absolutely not rent to the Border Patrol without a full public review.

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